

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

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DRAFTED BY EUR/EE:RAMOSHER:LCB
APPROVED BY EUR:JAARMITAGE
EUR/EE:CWSCHMIDT

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O 202343Z DEC 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SOFIA IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM, CGEN, PFOR, BU (MAREVA, RUMYANA AND YORDANKA)

SUBJECT: ARMITAGE-POPOV MEETING RE MAREV CASE

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REF: SOFIA 2639

1. ARMITAGE MET WITH AMBASSADOR POPOV, DECEMBER 18 TO DISCUSS THE MAREV CASE. ARMITAGE BEGAN BY REFERRING TO THIBAUT-KOVACHEV MEETING REPORTED REFTEL AND NOTING THAT A CLEAR DIVERGENCE OF OPINION BETWEEN THE GOB AND USG HAD BECOME APPARENT. HE STATED THAT KOVACHEV PRESENTED A VIEW CENTERED ON THE POSITION THAT THE MAREVS WERE STILL BULGARIAN CITIZENS.

2. ARMITAGE SAID HE WANTED TO MAKE THREE OR FOUR POINTS REGARDING THAT ISSUE, THE FIRST BEING A PURELY LEGAL ONE. HE PRESENTED POPOV WITH THE TEXT OF ARTICLE I OF THE 1924 TREATY OF NATURALIZATION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND BULGARIA, AND THEN READ THE SAME PASSAGE. HE NOTED THAT THE PASSAGE
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SEEMED UNEQUIVOCAL THAT MAREVS WOULD BE REGARDED BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS AS US CITIZENS WHO HAD LOST THEIR BULGARIAN CITIZENSHIP AND THAT HE WANTED TO REGISTER THAT FACT BEFORE PROCEEDINGS BY GOB AUTHORITIES IN MAREV CASE WERE TOO FAR ADVANCED.

3. ARMITAGE CONTINUED TO HIS THREE MAJOR POINTS. THE FIRST RELATED TO THE ZHIVKOV CONVERSATION EARLIER THIS YEAR WHEN THE US UNDERSTOOD HIM TO SAY THAT THE NUMBER OF CASES WAS SMALL AND SHOULD BE HANDED PROMPTLY AND SATISFACTORILY. ARMITAGE SAID WE HOPED MAREV CASE COULD BE HANDLED IN THAT CONTEXT.

4. THE SECOND POINT WAS THAT ZHIVKOV HAD SIGNED THE CSCE FINAL ACT AT HELSINKI AND ONE AREA OF THE ACT WAS DEVOTED TO THE DESIRABILITY OF REUNITING DIVIDED FAMILIES. ARMITAGE POINTED OUT THAT A REUNIFICATION OF THE MAREV FAMILY WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE LANGUAGE AND SPIRIT OF THE FINAL ACT.

5. ARMITAGE EMPHASIZED THAT HIS LAST POINT WAS A PRACTICAL ONE AND THAT HE WANTED TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO POPOV. HE STATED THAT THIS COUPLE HAD BEEN SO DEDICATED TO BEING REUNITED WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND HAD INDICATED A GREAT DEPTH OF FEELING BY THEIR DEMONSTRATION WHICH HAD NOW CONTINUED FOR 126 DAYS. THEY WERE DETERMINED TO SEE A HAPPY RESOLUTION OF THEIR CASE. IF THIS CASE CONTINUED IT WOULD ATTRACT STILL WIDER ATTENTION AND A GREAT DEAL OF SYMPATHY. ARMITAGE ADDED THAT HE WOULD BE MUCH SURPRISED IF THEY DID NOT ATTRACT A GOOD BIT OF CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC INTEREST. HE URGED POPOV TO MAKE CLEAR IN APPROPRIATE TERMS TO THE GOB THAT IF THIS CASE COULD BE SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED IT WOULD MAKE HELPFUL IMPRESSION BUT THAT IF IT WERE NOT, CASE WOULD GROW AS ISSUE IN OUR RELATIONS. ARMITAGE NOTED THAT PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE ON A NUMBER OF CASES, ESPECIALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN RECENT WEEKS. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT A WAY COULD BE FOUND TO INCLUDE THIS CASE IN THAT NUMBER.

6. POPOV ASKED IF HE WERE TO UNDERSTAND THAT HE (MAREV) WOULD DISAPPEAR FROM BEFORE THE (STATE DEPARTMENT) BUILDING AFTER ARMITAGE TALKED TO (POPOV) HIM? TO WHICH ARMITAGE REPLIED THAT IT WAS HIS (MAREV'S) DECISION. POPOV THEN ADVISED THAT HE HAD APPROACHED SOFIA TWO OR THREE TIMES ON THIS CASE AND ALWAYS RECEIVED A BLUNT REPLY. HE CLAIMED NOT TO KNOW THE LEGALITIES INVOLVED, ALTHOUGH HE DID KNOW THE USG POSITION, AND EMPHASIZED THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO GET INTO A DISCUSSION OF DETAILS. HE NOTED THAT IT HAD BEEN POINTED OUT ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS THAT THERE WOULD BE SOME CASES THAT COULD NOT BE SETTLED. IN THIS CASE THE CHILDREN WERE IN BOARDING SCHOOL AND ALL CARE WAS BEING TAKEN FOR THEM. HE EMPHASIZED AGAIN THAT THERE WOULD BE SOME CASES WHERE THE GOB FELT IT COULD NOT MOVE. THIS POSITION HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY DEPSEC INGERSOLL

AND OTHERS. POPOV ASKED HOW MANY CASES WERE LEFT --

WHERE THERE WERE NO DEMONSTRATIONS?

7. ARMITAGE NOTED THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THERE WERE AT LEAST FORTY CASES REMAINING UNRESOLVED. HE CONTINUED, STATING THAT HE APPRECIATED WHAT POPOV SAID BUT EMPHASIZED THAT IN THIS CASE THE HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS WOULD BE UNDERLINED BY THE DEPTH OF THEIR (MAREV'S) DEVOTION AND THEIR IMPRESSIVE DEMONSTRATION.

8. POPOV POINTED OUT THAT THE CHILDREN HAD BEEN LEFT IN BULGARIA AND THAT THIS MAN (MAREV) HAD HAD NO PROBLEMS IN BULGARIA. HE ADDED THAT HE (MAREV) HAD ADMITTED AS MUCH HIMSELF WHEN HE VISITED THE EMBASSY TO HAVE HIS PAPERS NOTARIZED. POPOV STRESSED THAT BY BULGARIAN LAW HE IS A CRIMINAL SINCE ONE IS NOT ALLOWED TO LEAVE CHILDREN OR OTHERS WHO CANNOT CARE FOR THEMSELVES. NOW, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POPOV CLAIMED, HE (MAREV) HAD PUT ON A CLEAN, VIRGIN MASK TO GATHER SYMPATHY TO HIS CASE.

9. ARMITAGE RECOGNIZED THE PROBLEMS RELATED TO EMIGRATION BECAUSE OF OUR DIFFERING LAWS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT FOR THAT VERY REASON HE WAS APPROACHING THIS CASE ON HUMANITARIAN AS WELL AS POLITICAL GROUNDS. HE NOTED THAT THEY (MAREVS) WOULD CONTINUE TO ATTRACT ATTENTION, AND INCREASINGLY SO, FROM U.S. PUBLIC AS WELL AS CONGRESS.

10. AS POPOV WAS LEAVING HE ASKED IF THE NATURALIZATION TREATY WERE STILL VALID, IF THERE WAS NOT A TIME LIMIT ON IT? ARMITAGE REPLIED THAT OUR LEGAL AUTHORITIES REGARD IT AS STILL VALID. POPOV CONTINUED THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO DISCUSS IT IN DETAIL AND THAT NATIONALITY DID NOT REALLY MATTER IN THIS CASE. ARMITAGE POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD RAISED IT ONLY BECAUSE KOVACHEV HAD DONE SO AND BECAUSE HIS POSITION HAD RESTED HEAVILY UPON THAT POINT. HE CONTINUED, NOTING TO POPOV THAT, AS WITH ALL COUNTRIES, U.S. CITIZENS ARE ENTITLED TO ALL SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE THEIR GOVERNMENT CAN PROVIDE.

11. FYI: AS POPOV WENT TO THE CAR HE ADVISED EUR/EE OFFICER THAT HE HAD ORIGINALLY BELIEVED MEETING WAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRESENTING NOTE GRANTING PERMISSION FOR OPENING OF COMMERCIAL-OFFICE. WE BELIEVE IT LIKELY THAT HE WILL REPORT THAT WE ARE WITH-HOLDING THIS NOTE PENDING THE SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF MAREV CASE. ALTHOUGH WE HAD NOT DECIDED WHETHER TO LINK TIMING OF PRESENTATION OF NOTE TO MAREV CASE, POPOV HAS NOW LEFT WASHINGTON ON

PERSONAL LEAVE AND WE DO NOT PLAN TO MAKE PRESENTATION

TO BULGARIANS THIS WEEK. IN MEANTIME, WE WILL AWAIT OUT-
COME OF EMBASSY'S MEETINGS WITH TSVETKOV (SOFIA 2678)
AND WITH MLADENOV. IF GOB QUESTIONS WHETHER USG IS
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HOLDING UP NOTE IN CONNECTION WITH MAREV CASE, EMBASSY
SHOULD RESPOND THAT IT HAS NO INFORMATION TO THAT EFFECT.

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